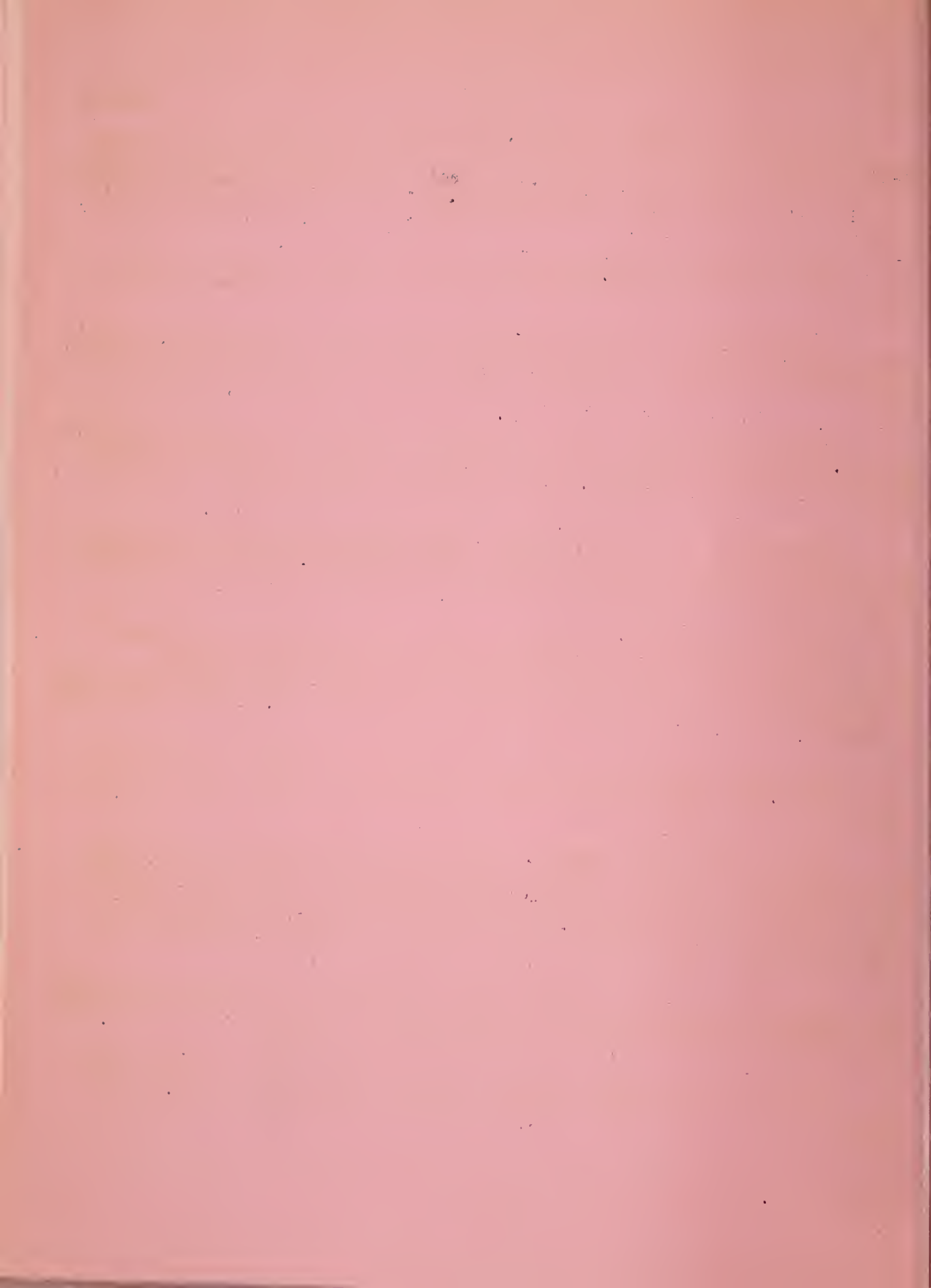


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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

SATURDAY December 17, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "OVEN GIFTS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture Publication offered: "Homemade Bread, Cake and Pastry," Bulletin 1775.

--ooOoo--

Speaking of homemade Christmas gifts as we were yesterday reminds me of a clever woman who specializes in baked gifts. Her Christmas slogan is: "Out of the oven and into the Christmas stocking." She believes that in this modern day a good many people have forgotten the old art of baking--or just haven't the time or place to bake bread and cake and cookies and so on. She says most of the families she knows, especially the city families, buy all their baked goods at the bakery or the grocery store. So once a year at least she sees to it that they have a homemade treat.

She chooses her recipes carefully according to the distance these oven gifts must go as well as to the likes and dislikes of the person to whom they go. If the food must be mailed, she makes sure it is not too crisp, or too fragile, or too soft to ship well. But if she delivers it herself, well, then she can choose anything from fluffy macaroons to a cake with thick soft icing--anything she knows will bring a big welcome.

Once upon a time when every housewife baked her own bread, a loaf of homemade bread would have been a ridiculous gift. But this lady I'm telling you about says she has several friends who think a loaf of her bread is the best possible gift. So the day before Christmas, like as not, she's busy baking a big batch of fine homemade bread and delivering it straight from the oven, still warm and fresh and fragrant. She has many variations of her standard bread recipe. One Christmas she may give her friends fruit or nut bread; another Christmas she may give them coconut bread; or peanut-butter bread; or even cheese bread. All these she makes just by adding an ingredient or two to her regular white yeast-bread recipe. For example, when she makes fruit bread, she simply adds a cup and a half of dried fruit--washed, soaked and chopped--to her regular recipe which calls for 2 pounds of white flour. The fruits she uses are dried figs, dates, prunes, apricots or raisins. For nut bread she just adds 2 cups of chopped nuts--pecans, walnuts, peanuts or hickory nuts--to her regular recipe along with a little extra sugar. Another favorite among her friends is coconut bread, made by adding a cup and a half of shredded coconut and a little extra sugar to the first mix of the white-bread dough. Then, there's peanut-butter bread. She adds a cup and a half of peanut butter and a little sugar to the regular recipe and the result is a delicious peanut-flavored loaf. Another favorite is cheese bread--2 cups of cheese shredded but no extra sugar added.

These are all variations of the white yeast bread recipe but they work just as well with quick breads, which as you know, are simply rich muffin mixtures baked in a loaf pan. They rise with baking powder, or acid and soda instead of yeast. By the way, this oven-gift lady tells me that a small or medium loaf of quick bread bakes best in a moderate oven of 350 degrees F.

When it comes to sweets from the oven, nothing makes more of a hit with friends or ships better than date bars. Here is the Bureau of Home Economics recipe for date bars. (You might get a pencil and jot the ingredients down as I give them.) Seven ingredients for date bars: Here they are: a cup and three-quarters of chopped pitted dates.....3 eggs.....1 cup of sugar.....1 cup of sifted flour..... a half teaspoon of salt.....a teaspoon of baking powder.....a cup of chopped nuts. That's all. I'll repeat that list just to be sure you didn't miss any item. (Repeat.)

Now about making the date bars. It's easy. First, beat the eggs. Then add the sugar, and then the sifted dry ingredients--the flour and salt and baking powder. Finally put in the chopped dates and nuts. Mix well. Pour into a greased shallow pan. Bake from 30 to 40 minutes in a very moderate oven--about 300 degrees Fahrenheit. When cool, cut in bars and roll in sugar. Ship and store in a tin box. No danger of breakage.

The cookie jar was once an established institution in the home. Now, in most city homes at least, cookies come in from the store by the package or the bag. A lot of children today have never even seen their mother roll and cut out cookies--one of the happy experiences of most children a generation ago. Appalling as it is to consider, there are youngsters today who never had the fun of making or baking a gingerbread man out of the scraps of cookie dough. But there. Stop me quick or I'm to shed tears for the good old days.

What I started to tell you is that the lady who specializes in oven gifts has found that almost anyone nowadays welcomes a box of homemade cookies. She saves the tin boxes with tight fitting lids--saves them the whole year 'round for her Christmas cookies. She paints those boxes in bright red enamel, fills them with cookies, wraps them in corrugated paper, and mails them far and wide with very happy results. She says small ginger snaps ship well; so do chocolate cookies, and nut cookies, and brownies. Very often she puts her recipe on a neatly written Christmas card at the top of the box.

Not everybody wants bread for Christmas and not everybody wants cookies or other sweets. But most people love cheese straws. Cheese straws are somewhat fragile for mailing unless they are packed with the greatest care. Just for good measure, I'm going to give you the Bureau of Home Economics recipe for cheese straws. It calls for 7 ingredients. I'll list them right now: a half cup of sifted flour..... a teaspoon of baking powder.....a half teaspoon of salt.....a tablespoon of butter or other fat.....a cup of soft bread crumbs.....3 tablespoons of milk.....a cup of grated cheese. I'll repeat those ingredients. (Repeat.) Now many people like cheese straws made "hot" by adding red pepper or tobasco sauce. Suit yourself on that point. You can add paprika, too, if you want to give them a redder color.

Here's the way to make the cheese straws. Sift the flour, baking powder, salt and paprika together. Rub in the butter or other fat with the finger tips. Add the bread crumbs, milk, tobasco sauce and cheese. Mix thoroughly. Now roll to one-fourth inch thick on a floured board. Cut in narrow strips and bake in a moderate oven--about 350 degrees for 20 minutes or until they are golden brown.

